

F Friends of the Land

A newsletter of Iowa's natural resources volunteer friends groups
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Keepers of the Land is the Iowa Department of Natural Resources
volunteer program.

Park friends donate \$4K for b-ball court

As campground host at Springbrook State Park, Rodger Burch gets a lot of visitors. People come to the retired volunteer with questions, just to say "hi" or for advice about the park. Early this summer, however, a group of about 30 kids visited his trailer not to ask a question, but to offer their thanks. One June

"It was a really special moment," said Springbrook State Park Friends Group President Anne Ford, who had told the kids about the gift.

"Rodger didn't know what

to say."

The Burches' donation easily qualifies as the most successful fundraising effort at Springbrook,

"There's no way we could have done this project without that donation,"

Hack said. "It was an incredibly generous gift and it's a huge asset to our park."

Burch and his wife Marilyn made their donation to the park through its friends group earlier this year. Springbrook used that money, along with matching funds provided by the DNR, to fund construction of a half-length court this May. After staff and contractors poured concrete, friends group members (including the Burches) and other volunteers installed the hoop itself over free camping weekend (May 13 - 15).

Since then, the court has proven quite popular, Ford said.

"It's been in use every Saturday night," she said.

The Burches' devotion to Springbrook began because of Marilyn Burch's roots in the area. Born and raised in Guthrie Center, she spent a lot of time at Springbrook as a child.

"I learned to swim out there," she said. "I caught my first fish out there when my grandpa taught me when I was five years old. I remember when there was a platform out in the lake and you could rent bathing suits."

After marrying Marilyn in

1989, Rodger quickly developed an appreciation for the park himself. Last summer, he volunteered as a campground host for the first time. In addition, he and

Marilyn have been volunteering with the friends group since its inception in 2003.

"We have to give something back to society," Rodger Burch said of their volunteer work. "We can't all be consumers. I just think it's a good thing to do."

The donation in particular was a chance to do something good for the park and see the effects immediately, he said.

"I don't see much reason for giving money to something after you die," Rodger Burch said. "I would rather see the results while I'm alive."

The basketball court joins a sand volleyball court built at Springbrook in 2003 and a horseshoe pit built last year. The playground was revamped in 2003. These new features have greatly improved the park's appeal, the basketball court especially, Hack said.

"It's a great addition to the recreation area we've been trying to build," she said.



Volunteers helped install the new hoop in early May.

evening, Burch found a troupe of kids aged 10 to 18 waiting outside his door – all sweaty, worn out from basketball, and grateful. They wanted to thank Burch for making Springbrook's new basketball court possible with a \$4,000 donation.

said park manager Carolyn Hack. By comparison, the park's friends group raised about \$800 last year collecting pop cans and gets roughly \$175 per BBQ or pedal pull fundraiser. The park itself has an annual facilities maintenance budget of \$6,000.

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Tooting your own horns:

A note from Keepers of the Land director Merry Rankin



Well, summer is upon us - and from the e-mails you've been sending, it seems you've got some great summer events planned. As you proceed, make sure you not only tell us what you're going to do... but afterwards, let us know what you accomplished. We really want to know -

for a couple of reasons.

First of all, our newsletter editor also does marketing and public relations for our volunteers. In other words, you have a free marketing service. After an event, you can highlight the fabulous work you did (helping other friends groups brainstorm) and increase your support systems - specifically money and donations.

Which leads to the second reason it's good to tell us about what you did. Records of volunteer hours and other in-kind donations are a great fundraising asset. Those numbers mean a lot to potential donors and also help fulfill requirements for most grant applications.

Think about it. If someone asks you to sponsor an effort, do you immediately give to the cause? I'm doubting it. In my

case, I need to know more about the project. 1. What's its purpose? 2. How will my donation be used? 3. What success has this event had in the past? 4. What other sources of support does the sponsoring organization have?

The same goes for a granting organization. Strong results and substantial, sustainable in-kind resources make for a solid grant proposal.

This will all take a little planning on your part. In order to use your free marketing service, you have to take some notes during your event. Stuff like... how many people attended, who your sponsors were and what did they provide, how much money was raised, how did this compare to other events, and how close were you to your event goals.

Similarly, to make use of your in-kind match sources, you have to record volunteer numbers and hours donated. And it just so happens that we have created a volunteer log form (sent to you this spring) to help document those numbers. Once you fill it out, you can return it to us and we'll enter the information into our database and have it for you when you need it. If you have misplaced this form, just let me know and we'll get another to you.

So, take some time and toot your horns, heck lay on them. There's no benefit in keeping all your good news and good work to yourself... economically or otherwise. Toot on friends!

Have a GREAT summer!

Field Report: Updates from other friends groups



The **Beeds Lake** friends plan to help erect a bench shelter on their park's causeway. They have bought grills, hand dryers and materials for a fish cleaning station.



The **Ft. Atkinson** friends held an April 13 planning meeting for this year's Ft. Atkinson Rendezvous, coming September 23 - 25. Roof repairs are planned for three buildings this summer.



Read about the **Mines of Spain** friends' fundraising project on page one.



The **Cedar Rock** friends recently established their group, elected officers and published a newsletter. They completed a Spring Cleanup and a Candlelight Walk.

Read about the **Springbrook** friends' basketball court donation, page 3.



Roughly 100 kids and parents attended the **Backbone** friends' spring fishing derby. The group also helped fund the repair of two stone entrance portals and an overlook bench.

The **Nine Eagles** friends continue to raise funds towards two new shelter houses in their park's equestrian area. The shelters will contribute to education, tourism, job-creation and economic development, group members said. They hope to have one or both of the shelters up by fall. The group also plans to raise money for the park's lodge, in part through the Iowa Values Fund. In previous years, this friends group has raised more than \$20,000 to help fund a new playground and shelter house.



The **Elk Rock** friends began fundraising this spring for a new horse arena. Members held a dance and auction, sent letters requesting support to local businesses and applied for grants. They plan to finish construction by mid-July. The new structure may eventually play host to horse shows and clinics. The group also plans to hang a mural (painted by a local high school art class) in the park's campground. In addition, the friends donated a pop machine to the park and have acquired a firewood splitting machine.

Friends Group tackles building-sized project

If all goes according to plan, Wayne Buchholtz should never have to turn away another school group.

In the past, the Mines of Spain State Park manager has had to deny educational programs to visiting field trippers. The park's E.B. Lyons Interpretive Center, though extensive for the state, simply lacked the space for larger groups. When buses packed with 60-90 kids pulled up,

wing, gaining 6350 square feet in extra space.

"It's a much needed addition," said Friends Group President Doug Olk.

After nearly two-years of planning, the friends group is on the cusp of its major fundraising activities. Since last fall, the volunteers have compiled lists of potential donors. They divided those groups into three categories: about 500 contacts to whom

their pitch to the general public for a city and countywide campaign.

When all the money's been raised, the DNR will take over the project, overseeing contract bidding, engineering and construction.

A deep appreciation for the park and its place in the community motivates the friends group members, said friends group vice president Charlie Winterwood.

"I think we know we have a valuable resource and we want to make it available to more people," he said. Aside from compiling donor lists, over the last year the friends have been working to create their promotional materials and research potential grant opportunities. Last fall, in order to better tackle the project, the group doubled the size of its board, adding people who could bring needed skills and contacts.

They added a teacher, a historian, an employee of the City of Dubuque government, an attorney, an ex-Senator and other new members who have proven instrumental in the effort, Olk said.

"So far, they've really come through with some great ideas," he said. "Everyone else has stepped up, too."

The new members have also helped spread out the workload – much more gets done when individual members take a task or project and "run with it," Olk said.

The proposed new structure has both friends group volunteers and members of the community excited, he said. Designed to blend in with existing buildings, the new structure will look like a mir-

ror image of the original E.B. Lyons center, connected to it by a corridor.

The Dubuque Durant Group designed the addition so that it would not look

See **E.B. Lyons** page 4

New Keepers of the Land volunteer liaison

Please welcome Tricia



Rummer, the new Keepers of the Land team member. In

February, Tricia replaced Tom O'Neill, who had served with the program since 2003.

O'Neill now works with the DNR's "Kaizen" process improvement team.

Acting as an assistant to Keepers of the Land director Merry Rankin, Tricia will be your contact for reporting volunteer hours and will offer assistance and direction in many other ways. You all have likely already heard from Tricia, and should expect to communicate with her further in the future.

Tricia, as Tom had done, is serving as an AmeriCorps member – one of 47 serving the DNR. Tricia is originally from Corning, Iowa and graduated from Northwestern Missouri State University in 2003 with a degree in speech communication.

Good luck to Tom and welcome to Tricia!



The new center will be a mirror image of the original, shown here

things could get cramped.

Thanks to the efforts of some local volunteers, however, the park may one day boast enough space to educate all its visitors. The Friends of the Mines of Spain volunteer group will soon embark on a massive fundraising effort, aimed at financing a \$1.2 million addition to the center.

"It's a wonderful program," State Parks and Preserves Bureau Chief Kevin Szcodronski said of the effort. "It will greatly improve the usability of that nature center. It's an energetic project for a friends group but they'll get it done, I have no doubt."

Already larger than any other Iowa state park interpretive center, E.B. Lyons would double in size with the new

they'll send letters asking for non-specific donations, over 100 to whom they'll send letters requesting specific amounts (\$1,000-10,000), and about 60 to whom they'll speak in person.

Presentations to this last group (each expected to donate between \$10,000 and \$100,000) will include a promotional video and book length brochure.

Once the friends make the final touches to their brochure and video, they will send out the letters and hit the pavement to make their pitch, Olk said. The group plans to raise at least half of the project's funds from major donors, which will likely take several months.

After that, they will take

New center to boast meeting space, science lab

E.B. Lyons

Continued from page 3

added on, Szcodronski said.

Though identical from the outside, the new center will boast many new features. A large meeting room will dom-

opening up space in the original center for a library reference room. The new building will also have a small kitchenette, extra space for artifact storage and a classroom style-biology lab capable of accommodating 30 students.

gatherings, Szcodronski said.

The Mines of Spain friends have no intention of stopping with the nature center project, however. Other proposed efforts include trail

improvements, new stairs and shelters, a viewing tower and preservation work on a wetlands area.

"It's not small stuff,"

Buchholtz said.

Look for the MOS friends in *Big River* magazine's next issue: www.big-river.com

inate the building's upper level, providing space not only for meetings but also for displays and educational presentations. At the same time, the center will provide space for other, smaller groups to meet.

Park staff will move their offices into the new building,

Complete with black lab tables and microscopes (given by an anonymous donor), the lab will take up most of the new building's ground floor.

The extra space will also make the center an ideal spot for civic group meetings, conferences, weddings and other

Free Paint - NCPD!

The National Council on Paint Disposition, Inc. is making free, unused retail paint available to not-for-profit organizations – like friends groups! This environmental group wants to salvage the millions of gallons of paint left unused every year due to minor mis-tinting or discontinuance of product. To get involved, send all contact information (organization name, contact name, phone, fax and e-mail) to Marv Goodman at marvgoodman@comcast.net.

Call 732-309-2022 with questions.

Calendar

July

- * **July 2:** Nine Eagles friends hog roast, 5-8 p.m., at the park.
- * **July 3:** Beeds Lake friends omelet breakfast, 7 a.m., at the park.
- * **July 10:** Union Grove State Park annual fundraising triathlon, 7 a.m., at the park.

August

- * **Aug. 11-21:** Iowa State Fair. Volunteers will help construct the 2005 Riverse sculpture using trash collected during Project AWARE.
- * **Aug. 16:** Nine Eagles friends hog roast, 5-8 p.m. at the park.

Look for more volunteer news and events at:
www.keepersoftheland.org

September

- * **Sept. 3:** Nine Eagles friends hog roast and dance, 5-8 p.m., at the park.
- * **Sept. 10:** Mines of Spain Fall Seminar, 7:30 a.m.
- * **Sept. 10:** Wildcat Den State Park 5K Run/Walk through the park, 8 a.m.
- * **Sept. 10-18:** Clay County Fair in Spencer. Volunteers to again assist with Riverse.
- * **Sept. 17:** Wildcat Den Heritage Day and Buckskinners Rendezvous, 10 a.m. Buckskinners at the park through Saturday.
- * **Sept. 23-25:** The 2005 Ft. Atkinson Rendezvous: "Religion on the Frontier."

October

- * **Oct. 15:** Mines of Spain Annual Appreciation Dinner, 6 p.m.
- * Seminar/panel discussion on Usonian home design, hosted by the Cedar Rock Friends (caretakers of the Frank Lloyd Wright 'Walter House'). Date TBA.